



Defining Handicap Limits in Competitions

Clubs have 3 options:

- **Option 1** - No handicap entry limits:

Allow all players to play using their actual handicap index and course handicap, with the appropriate handicap allowance for the type of round being played. By using their calculated playing handicap, all competitors have the possibility of featuring in the prizes. This will apply to any competition format. Divisions for allocation of prizes are recommended, giving all players the opportunity to compete against their peers. These can be set wherever the Committee feels is most equitable.

- **Option 2** - Set handicap entry limits:

Any limits must be clearly stated in the Terms of Competition upon entry. It is strongly recommended that the limit is set using the HI, because this is something which the player will know, or can easily find out. Alternatively, a limit could be placed with reference to the maximum playing handicap; although the player would not intuitively know this in advance of play.

It is acceptable, although not recommended that, whilst not limiting the handicap index eligible in the Terms of Competition, within those Terms a cap may be placed on the maximum playing handicap allowed. However, any handicap index calculations will be made using the player's actual full handicap index/course handicap.

- **Option 3** – Specified limits:

A competition is set up without a handicap index entry limit, which would allow all players to enter. However, eligibility for the main prize or trophy may be limited to a maximum (or minimum) handicap index allowance. This must be clearly stated in the Terms of Competition before play.



For example: A competition is set up with a maximum handicap index which would allow all players to enter (notionally 54.0), and this would be stated in the Terms of Competition. The Terms of Competition would then state:

“This event is open to all players up to a maximum handicap index of (54.0). However, eligibility for the Trophy will be limited to a maximum handicap index allowance of (36.4). Other prizes will be awarded in divisions, as follows: Div. 1 up to 15.4 handicap index; Div. 2 from 15.5 to 25.4 handicap index; Div. 3 from 25.5 to 32.4 handicap; Div. 4 from 32.5 to 54.0 handicap.” These divisions could be adjusted to reflect the demographic of the individual Club. The course handicap could be used as the limit for the divisions if the Committee chooses; but this must be clearly stated before play. The course handicap approach would not be recommended if any competitors were entering from outside the club; as it would require some effort for players to determine their eligibility prior to entry/arrival.

By using this format, everyone can enter the competition (as the handicap index limit is (54.0); and for handicap calculation purposes, players will receive their full handicap allowance. However, the report produced for Trophy purposes will limit everyone to 36.4. In the same way, a limit for the Trophy of 15.5 to 28.4 could apply: resulting in players below 15.5 or above 28.4 not being eligible for the Trophy (only for divisional prizes). Individual clubs should make their own equitable choices.

It is important to ensure that all players have the opportunity to compete in competitions, and that higher handicaps are not discriminated against. Maintaining player interest in the sport is of crucial importance; both for the declining or improving high handicap golfer. If the player is correctly handicapped, there should be no advantage to holding a high or low handicap index: the course handicap and playing handicap calculations should provide equity for all competitors.

It should be noted that all the percentage allowances listed in the Rules of Handicapping, used for calculating the playing handicap for competition purposes, are **mandatory** within the CONGU jurisdiction.